

## Claims

1. An improved frame construction for a firearm of the type having a frame having a side terminating at a top planar surface, a slide constrained to move longitudinally between a forward and a rearward position, said slide defining a bottom planar surface extending parallel to and slidable across said frame top surface, said slide being removable from the frame, a barrel for receiving a cartridge, a firing pin longitudinally movable in the slide so as to strike the cartridge, a hammer arranged to strike the firing pin, a trigger, and a hammer trigger mechanism arranged to release the hammer when the trigger is pulled, **said improvement being characterized by:**

said frame having a side opening commencing at the frame top surface and defining a recess in the side of the frame facing said side opening,

said hammer trigger mechanism being disposed in said recess and accessible through said side opening,

a side plate arranged to cover said side opening, said side plate having a top planar surface disposed to be held in place by said slide bottom planar surface when the slide moves longitudinally between forward and rearward positions, said slide being removable from the frame to release the side plate when the slide is removed.

2. Improved frame construction in accordance with Claim 1, wherein said side plate and said frame opening have congruent interlocking edges arranged to permit only upward movement of the side plate, and wherein said slide bottom planar surface prevents upward movement of the side plate when the slide moves longitudinally between forward and rearward positions.

3. Improved frame construction in accordance with Claim 2, wherein said side plate includes side edges and a bottom edge each defining a flange, and

wherein said side opening includes side edges and a bottom edge each defining a groove, said flange and said groove arranged and dimensioned to retain the side plate against outward movement with respect to the frame.

- 5      4.      Improved frame construction in accordance with Claim 2, wherein said side plate bottom edge is interrupted to provide a cutout adapted for use to move the side plate in an upward direction to remove the side plate after the slide has previously been removed.
- 10      5.      Improved frame construction in accordance with Claim 1, wherein the length of said side plate between its side edges is substantially the same as the distance between said trigger and said hammer of the firearm.